

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8267

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 11374

CANBERRA FOR DEP SEC PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: DEFENSE UNDERSECRETARY CALLS US-RP RELATIONS ONE-SIDED

REF: MANILA 3531

BEGIN SUMMARY: AT RECENT NEWS CONFERENCE, DEFENSE UNDER-
SECRETARY BARBERO LABELLED US-RP RELATIONS ONE-SIDED AND
SAID IT WAS TIME US ACCEPTED PHILIPPINE SOVEREIGNTY OVER
THE MILITARY BASES. BARBERO ALSO TOUCHED ON ALLEGED TORTURE
OF POLITICAL DETAINEES AND THE CASE OF AMCIT JEFFREY BRUCE
HOOTMAN, HELD HERE ON DRUG CHARGES. END SUMMARY.

1. DEFENSE UNDERSECRETARY FOR CIVIL RELATIONS CARMELO
BARBERO SPOKE JULY 30 BEFORE THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS
ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES (TEXT UNAVAILABLE). BARBERO'S
REMARKS WERE REPORTED LOCALLY ONLY BY CHINESE/ENGLISH DAILY
THE ORIENT NEWS, OWNED AND EDITED BY KERIMA POLOTAN, WIFE
OF PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT JUAN TUVERA.

ORIENT NEWS ACCORDED STORY PROMINENT FRONT-PAGE HEADLINE,
"SHABBY US TREATMENT OF RP SCORED". AP ACCOUNT OF PRESS
CONFERENCE ALSO PLAYED UP REMARKS ON US DEFENSE COMMITMENT
TO THE PHILIPPINES, BUT IN ADDITION REPORTED BARBERO'S
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REMARKS ON POLITICAL PRISONERS, WHICH ORIENT NEWS CHOSE

TO IGNORE.

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, BARBERO CALLED US-RP RELATIONS "MOSTLY ONE-SIDED." BARBERO REPORTEDLY CLAIMED US WILL NOT COME TO THE DEFENSE OF THE PHILIPPINES UNLESS THE US BASES HERE ARE ATTACKED. HE ASKED RHETORICALLY, "I WONDER IF THE AMERICANS WOULD PROTECT THE REED BANK IF IT WERE ATTACKED BY CHINA OR VIETNAM, WHO CLAIM THEY HAVE AS MUCH RIGHT TO IT AS WE HAVE?" IN CONTRAST, SAID BARBERO, "ANY TIME A THIRD PARTY ATTACKS SUBIC BAY OR CLARK AIR BASE, THE PHILIPPINES WILL BE COMPELLED TO FIGHT WITH AMERICANS AGAINST THE ATTACKERS." BARBERO CONTINUED, "WE'VE PROVEN OUR AFFECTION IN TERMS OF LIVES AND CONTINUE, I THINK, TO BE THE BEST FRIENDS OF AMERICANS IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. IF WE WANT TO ASSERT OUR SOVEREIGNTY, IF AMOR PROPIO IS THE ONLY THING LEFT TO US, WHY BEGRUDGE US?" ORIENT NEWS REPORTED BARBERO "BRISTLED" WHEN ASKED ABOUT POSSIBLE REACTION OF US CONGRESS TO RP DEMANDS FOR JURISDICTION OVER US SERVICEMEN AND REPLIED, "THE SOONER AMERICAN AUTHORITIES GIVE IN TO WHAT I THINK IS THE VERY REASONABLE REQUEST (OF PRESIDENT MARCOS), THE BETTER FOR ALL OF US."

3. BARBERO ALSO COMMENTED ON RECENT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT ALLEGING TORTURE BY GOP OF POLITICAL PRISONERS. HE BLAMED PHILIPPINE INTELLIGENCE PERSONNEL FOR SUCH ABUSES, SAYING, "INTELLIGENCE TEAMS MAY ARREST A SUSPECT, AND IN THE PAST THESE TEAMS BROUGHT SUSPECTS TO SAFE HOUSE FOR INTERROGATION. IT IS DURING THIS PERIOD, IN THE SAFE HOUSES, THAT TORTURE HAS BEEN AFFLICTED." BARBERO CLAIMED THE MARCOS REGIME HAS ALREADY MOVED TO STOP ABUSE OF PRISONERS. HE SAID SAFE HOUSES STILL EXIST, BUT WOULD NO LONGER BE USED FOR INTERROGATION.

4. BARBERO REFERRED BRIEFLY IN HIS SPEECH TO THE CASE OF AMCIT JEFFREY BRUCE HOOTMAN, WHO HAS BEEN HELD AWAITING TRIAL ON DRUG CHARGES IN OLONGAPO CITY SINCE DECEMBER 1975 (SEE REFTEL). APPARENTLY RESPONDING TO QUESTION
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REGARDING HOOTMAN, BARBERO SAID "THE PRESENT SITUATION IS MUCH WORSE (SIC) THAN THE ONE INCIDENT OF ONE SOLITARY AMERICAN.....THEY SHOULD NOT NITPICK JUST BECAUSE ONE SOLITARY AMERICAN IS MALTREATED."
(NOTE: HOOTMAN CASE HIT THE LOCAL PRESS JULY 29, WHEN BULLETIN TODAY CARRIED RESPONSE OF JUSTICE SECRETARY ABAD SANTOS TO INQUIRY REPORTEDLY SENT BY REP. JOHN DENT (D. -PA.) TO PHILIPPINE EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON.

INQUIRY APPARENTLY ORIGINATED WITH COMPLAINT BY HOOTMAN'S MOTHER THAT GOP HAS BEEN DRAGGING ITS FEET IN SETTING SON'S TRIAL DATE. TO DATE EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED NO EXPRESSION OF CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN CASE. CONSULAR OFFICER HAS VISITED HOOTMAN ON TWO OCCASIONS.)

5. COMMENT: BARBERO'S REMARKS UNDERSCORE ONCE AGAIN FILIPINO DOUBTS ABOUT US DEFENSE COMMITMENT AS WELL AS EMOTIONAL IMPACT HERE OF SOVEREIGNTY QUESTION. HOWEVER, IT MAY BE NOTEWORTHY THAT PRINCIPAL MANILA DAILIES DID NOT REPORT BARBERO'S REMARKS AT ALL. ONLY LOCAL PAPER TO CARRY STORY, ORIENT NEWS, HAS BEEN PERSISTENT AND VIRULENT CRITIC OF U.S. SULLIVAN

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